

## Knowledge Sharing Behaviors of Sports Virtual Community Members

Yen-chun Lin, National College of Physical Education and Sports, Taiwan

**Session 8: Other  
Presentation (25-minute)**

**Thursday, May 31, 2007**

**2:00 PM - 2:25 PM**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) indicated that as humans meet basic needs, they seek to satisfy successively higher needs. A community fulfills higher needs. In addition, sense of community contains four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, shares emotional connection, and is a feeling that members have of belongings (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Further, three types of community are identified: location, profession, and identity community. A virtual community is a kind of identity community, which a group of people primarily communicate or interact with each other over the internet, rather than in person. In addition, virtual communities satisfy the needs of transaction, interest, fantasy, and relationship as well (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996).

Virtual community is a platform of knowledge sharing where seekers of specific knowledge and the providers of needed knowledge will meet. Due to the participants of a virtual community usually have common interests; they have a good deal to share with each other. However, most members of a community act as lurkers, only some members participate actively. Sharing is the essentiality and the most important concepts of internet world and virtual communities, once members stop interacting with each other, the community stop functioning as well (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996; Holtshouse, 1998; Adler & Christopher, 1998).

The most popular virtual community in Taiwan is a Bulletin Board System (BBS) named PTT. BBS is a text-only interface system used prior to forum interface, and users are free to post with few limitations. PTT is the major BBS in Taiwan with more than 600,000 registered users and 8,000 message boards. Under sports category, 361 sports related message boards cover different sports from both international and domestic sport teams, athletes, and leagues. Most of the time, knowledge and information of sports shared on these message boards are richer than mass media of Taiwan.

However, sports message boards of PTT are no more than a platform for users to interact with each other. To make these boards informative relies heavily on users' sharing behaviors. Some users of PTT sports message boards share knowledge and information constantly without compensation. They not only provide sports news, attractive sidelights, and links of photos and video clips, but make their own analysis of team strategies, performance, and management. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the motivations, beliefs, and altruistic behaviors of these knowledge providers in virtual community with the benefits they gain through sharing behaviors, and the role of sports in this sharing process.

According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB), human action is guided by three kinds of consideration: behavioral beliefs which produce attitude toward the behavior, normative beliefs which result in subjective norm, and control beliefs which give rise to perceived behavioral control. Moreover, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perception of behavioral control lead to the formation of a behavioral intention. Thus, intention is assumed to be the immediate antecedent of behavior. Consequently, the sharing behaviors of virtual community members can be analyzed by the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985).

In-depth qualitative interviews will be adopted for this exploratory study in order to determine the underlying motives and benefits behind sharing knowledge among specific PTT users. Nine PTT users who have posted certain amount of articles this past year will be selected as interviewees. The theory of planned behavior and group dynamics will be the main concepts of semi-structured questions checklist.

The findings of this study are expected to understand the sports knowledge sharing behaviors in virtual community and relationship with fans behaviors. Additionally, this study may assist practitioners in terms of improving social interaction and interchange in virtual world.